

WOMEN, PHYSICAL CULTURE AND DECOLONIAL PRACTICES**MULHERES, CULTURA FÍSICA E PRÁTICAS DECOLONIAIS**Eliane Regina Crestani Tortola¹, Ábia Lima de França², Larissa Michelle Lara³¹ Federal University of Paraná, Matinhos-PR, Brazil.² Federal University of Bahia, Salvador-BA, Brazil.³ State University of Maringá, Maringá-PR, Brazil

The oppression that falls upon women's bodies, in its multiple forms, is articulated within a historical logic of domination sustained by colonial and capitalist structures that render their social agency invisible. Within the sphere of physical culture, this oppression is constantly mobilized to reinforce the centrality of men as legitimate subjects of sports and leisure practices, depriving women of this right, particularly those who are not in positions of privilege, such as Black women and those belonging to the working classes. Thus, engaging with issues that affect diverse women and their experiences in the environments of physical culture allows for the recognition and valuing of plural narratives, understanding them as situated, embodied forms of knowledge production, crossed by power relations that may constitute loci of resistance. This opens space for decolonial practices capable of challenging and reconfiguring dynamics of exclusion and silencing, enabling other ways of relating to the body, the environment, and the collective. As Paula Viviane Chiés¹ observes, such practices not only broaden processes of inclusion but also foster the construction of a critical awareness of the gender and racial inequalities that permeate sport and physical education, while simultaneously affirming ethical, sensitive, and interdependent ways of inhabiting the world.

In recent years, debates and studies addressing forms of oppression exercised against women have gained significant relevance. As a consequence, concerns have emerged regarding intersectionality and the violences related to gender, sexuality, social class, race/ethnicity, body, health, religion, and access to physical culture (see, for example, Audre Lorde²; Angela Arruda³; Simone Fullagar et al.⁴). Understanding how social markers of difference and coloniality intertwine in women's experiences is a necessary way to deconstruct Eurocentric standards of performance, health, and beauty, as well as to challenge norms that marginalize diverse bodies deviating from socially established expectations. As Rita Laura Segato⁵ reminds us, in recent decades there has been an increase in cruelty against women's bodies, particularly Black, Indigenous, and minority women who engage in certain practices (capoeira, dance, gymnastics, among others) as forms of cultural and political resistance. To comprehend physical culture as a possibility for historically controlled and objectified bodies to recognize forms of oppression – constructing themselves as resistance and agency – becomes an action more than necessary.

According to UN Women – the entity responsible for publishing reports on the status of women and gender policies worldwide – despite 30 years having passed since the 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 (an event that established a progressive plan for the rights of women and girls globally), no nation has yet achieved gender equality. Although some countries have advanced in policies protecting women's rights – such as anti-discrimination and gender-based violence laws in Canada and New Zealand, and legislation addressing violence against women in Brazil (Law No. 11.340/2006⁷ and Law No. 14.994/2024⁸) – many daily struggles still persist.

As we observe the growing wave of feminist movements around the world—particularly in Latin America, with initiatives such as *Ni Una Menos* in Argentina and the *Marcha das Margaridas* in Brazil – we simultaneously witness setbacks: the rise of far-right policies and narratives portraying women’s rights movements as threats to traditional family values; the growth of religious fundamentalism, which restricts women’s rights, opportunities, and autonomy; the implementation of discriminatory policies that directly affect how women occupy social roles and exercise leadership in different spaces; and the strengthening of misogynistic movements and discourses mediated by social networks, such as the *redpill*, which culminate in various forms of violence against women.

Motivated by numerous historical events on a global scale and also by a particular episode in Brazil, when her effigy was burned by a crowd while she was participating in a seminar on democracy, Judith Butler^{9:06-08} makes a singular contribution with reflections on gender-based violence. The researcher employs the term ‘phantasm’ to describe that which “feeds fascist tendencies”, that which “seeks to totalize the social field” and instills fear. She understands that various metaphors have been (and continue to be) used to portray gender as an ‘extreme danger’ (the destruction of life) and to provoke fears and anxieties with speed and intensity, though without coherence or consistency. These metaphors, present in clerical matrices, in legislative debates concerning women, in racism, in coloniality, among other spaces, result from the convergence between fascism and anti-gender politics that disregard democratic processes and forms of existence.

At present, we observe with concern the enactment of laws by conservative governments that restrict women’s rights and adopt policies limiting access to abortion, to healthcare (especially for transgender people), and to participation in sports. These events reflect the impact of colonization on gender structures and women’s rights in various regions of the world, as well as fascist behaviors materialized in practices and discourses that erode democracy, exalt authoritarian leaders, and promote social exclusion. As Maria Lugones¹⁰ describes, the coloniality of gender persists, manifesting itself at the intersection of constructions of gender, class, and race, which are central to the maintenance of the global capitalist system of power. In this context, the struggle for women’s rights today is, in many respects, resistance against the legacy of colonialism and the pursuit of a just and equal redefinition of gender relations in all spheres of life.

Democratic, conscious, and embodied access to physical culture – significantly impacted by colonization through the erasure of traditional manifestations (dances, rituals, games, combat techniques, among others), by capitalism shaping aesthetic standards and ideal bodies, and by the valorization of European, white, male sporting models – represents one of the pathways to resist the coloniality of power. Changing this scenario requires education and awareness, the revalorization of traditional practices, the recognition of cultures, the promotion of inclusion and diversity, as well as the development of infrastructure accessible to different populations. These efforts can contribute to creating a fair and inclusive environment that fosters women’s access to physical culture, challenging the colonial legacy.

The reflections proposed in the Special Issue *Women, Physical Culture and Decolonial Practices* aim to promote analyses of gender oppression, particularly that faced by women when accessing (or not) different movement experiences. Its organization constitutes one of the developments of the actions foreseen in the research project *Decolonial Challenges in Physical Culture: Ethnic-Racial, Gender, and Social Class Crossings*, supported by CNPq (Process No. 407669/2023-0) and involving a network of several researchers from Brazilian and international Higher Education Institutions, as well as collaborators active in civil society. The Special Issue brings together ten texts that reveal the engagement of researchers in denouncing and problematizing colonial oppressions. The aim is to contribute to the construction of a fair and inclusive scenario for women and other historically marginalized bodies to access physical

culture, while simultaneously challenging and confronting the colonial legacy still present in this field with a view to its overcoming. This occurs at a moment of confrontation with new/old movements that promote misogyny, attack feminism, and preach supposed male superiority (such as the so-called ‘manosphere’ and its offshoots, which transform hatred into a digital product to dehumanize and oppress women). Often, this logic of symbolic violence culminates in its most extreme form: femicide. As Angela Davis^{11:55} reminds us, “[...] violence against women is the most pandemic form in the world,” given that it quickly branches out and interconnects with different social, economic, and political contexts and structures.

The articles that compose the Special Issue include contributions from researchers in Brazil (the majority), Malaysia, and Spain. The texts are vibrant and enrich the academic debate by mobilizing diverse theoretical and practical perspectives that problematize women’s experiences, while proposing strategies of intervention through projects and approaches aimed at overcoming the state of oppression and coloniality that affects them. They move across distinct theoretical and empirical perspectives, anchored in a decolonial lens, and present reflections, challenges, and experiences of (re)existence that contribute to the deconstruction of Eurocentric patterns imposed within physical culture and beyond. By questioning norms that marginalize diverse bodies and exclude them from the broader field of physical culture, these publications point to possible pathways of resistance to the coloniality of power, of being, and of knowledge, grounded in singular and historically situated experiences.

Decolonizing women’s physical culture: communication strategies for contemporary fitness among Muslim women is the manuscript developed by Zaffira Firzana Zaffri, Nurul Hidayah Mat, Rabiua Mua’zu Musa, Fanora Mat, and Radhiah Ismail, researchers affiliated with Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. The authors invite us to reflect on the fitness experiences of Malay Muslim women through negotiations between bodily autonomy, prayer routines, behaviors, community expectations, clothing, and digital media, which challenge Western norms centered on individualism, performativity, and aesthetics. The authors argue that decolonizing the physical culture of Muslim women implies recognizing diverse epistemologies, valuing faith-informed practices, and promoting participatory methodologies that prioritize women’s own voices in local sociocultural contexts, thereby expanding their access to safe and culturally responsive fitness spaces.

Ecofeminism in teacher education: bodies, gender, care, and socio-environmental justice in school education by Angelita Belo presents an autobiographical narrative focused on the formative effects of an experience lived during the Professional Master’s Program in the National Network for Environmental Science Education at the Federal University of Paraná, particularly within the course Ecofeminism: Woman, Environment, and the Ethics of Care. The author mobilizes self-writing as a methodological strategy, articulating experience and theoretical elaboration to analyze how ecofeminist training can provoke shifts in the understanding of teaching and Environmental Education. In this process, the text establishes a dialogue between ecofeminism, intersectionality, and Critical Environmental Education, highlighting that the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women are sustained by patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial structures, with more intense impacts on Black, Indigenous, and marginalized women. By bringing Vandana Shiva’s reflections closer to Brazilian contexts, the work also emphasizes practices of care and land preservation developed by women in Indigenous, quilombola, and rural communities, pointing to the need to re-signify teaching practice.

The text produced by Tatiane Viana Figueiró and Eliane Regina Crestani Tortola, titled *Body, care, and resistance in teaching: an ecofeminist and autoethnographic reading*, sought to understand how body, care, and leisure are neglected dimensions in the teaching trajectory, revealing tensions between school life and the social constraints that shape women’s lives. Through autoethnographic writing, revisiting the trajectory of one of the authors as a

woman, mother, educator, and *caiçara* (a member of traditional coastal communities in Brazil), it becomes evident that body, care, and leisure are systematically rendered invisible in women's experiences, especially among teachers. In this context, teaching emerges as an act of courage, materialized in everyday gestures of resistance and care. The authors conclude that women's suffering has a structural character and that feminism calls for the recognition of one's own value and the breaking of the silence imposed by patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial logics, which simultaneously exploit women and nature.

Simone Rechia, in the article *Leisure as urban resistance and decolonial practice: experiences of women in the city*, offers us the sharing of women's bodily and cultural experiences by investigating how leisure can be constituted as urban resistance and decolonial practice. Her experience – translated through a feminist and decolonial perspective – included discussion circles, coffee gatherings, participation in fairs, dance and yoga classes, with the purpose of expanding women's circulation in urban space, promoting their occupation of leisure spaces, and encouraging the rediscovery of the body and the construction of autonomy. The author understands leisure as urban resistance and as an aesthetic and political language capable of destabilizing colonialities and gender norms, as well as enhancing women's right to the city. In this sense, she considers that the experience developed with women is formative and political, capable of re-signifying their daily lives through the sharing of knowledge, as well as encouraging their presence and participation in public spaces.

In the article *Women in physical culture circles: bodies, narratives, and decolonial practices*, Gabriella Gonçalves Mendes da Silva, Jucimeire Rocha Macêdo, and Larissa Michelle Lara, present a project developed with women in a local context through the theoretical-methodological perspective of the physical culture circle, inspired by Paulo Freire's culture circle, in dialogue with decolonial debates and the approach of physical cultural studies. Through this project, carried out in a sports center in the city of Maringá-PR, singular, empowering, and emancipatory experiences were constructed, offering tools to confront coloniality and reaffirm the body as a territory of care, knowledge production, and social transformation. In addition to understanding how women are shaped by race/ethnicity, gender, and social class, and identifying the difficulties they face in accessing physical culture, the article contributes to the documentation of embodied experiences that illustrate possibilities for materializing physical culture circles in other times and spaces.

Vitor Hugo Marani and Ábia Lima de França, in the article *Capoeira and the physical culture circle: decolonial gingas in physical education*, show how capoeira can be integrated into school Physical Education through the methodology of the physical culture circle, contributing to a critical education committed to decoloniality and the valorization of Afro-diasporic knowledge. The authors employed an exploratory and qualitative methodology, presented as an experience report based on reflections and practices developed within the Brazilian educational context. The main discussion revolves around how capoeira, when articulated with this methodology, transcends technical approaches, allowing its understanding within broader social power relations, as a decolonial pedagogy. This approach presents critiques of modernity and the coloniality of knowledge, aiming at dignity, plurality, and social justice. The study proposes a profound dialogue that reflects the decolonial perspective, emphasizes the importance of questioning and challenging hierarchies, and encourages critical reflections on the dynamics of power that shape our societies.

The study *Mapping interactions on social media posts about women sport journalists: is there still a glass ceiling?*, developed by Gabriela Ferreira de Mello, Gustavo Piana Passos da Silva, Maria Fernanda de Mello, Ana Paula Cabral Bonin Maoski, and Mayara Torres Ordonhes, aims to identify the nature of interactions involving female sports journalists on social media, specifically regarding posts by women during the first round of the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup. The authors reveal that although women are increasingly present in sports

journalism, they face significant hostility and symbolic violence, particularly on institutional platforms, indicating that gender equity remains unattained. The study references works that discuss the role of women in sports and leadership, as well as the challenges faced by female journalists, reflecting on this phenomenon not merely as a simple 'glass ceiling'. These analyses highlight the urgent need to promote a more inclusive and equitable environment for women, especially within the context of sport and physical culture.

In *Feminist research and collaborative self-study: decolonial pathways in physical education*, Mariana Zuaneti Martins, Isabela Moreira Sant'Anna, and Maria Eduarda Erlacher Figueiredo address feminist and decolonial research in physical education through collaborative self-study as a method to confront the exclusion of marginalized bodies, particularly girls. The study was conducted in public schools in Espírito Santo, Brazil, involving direct engagement with students and focusing on inclusive practices that value children's voices. By advocating a shift from teacher-centered approaches to student-centered approaches, the authors promote active engagement and dialogue in the classroom, emphasizing the importance of recognizing power dynamics in educational settings to foster trust and critical support among educators. The study highlights three fundamental dimensions: the displacement of teacher centrality through listening to students, the denaturalization of gender patterns and visibility of subtle inequalities, and the creation of spaces of empathy and support in contexts of precarization.

João Paulo Marques and Leandro Teófilo de Brito, in the article *Pedagogies of masculinities in bodily practices: possible dialogues between discursive and decolonial studies*, analyze discursive and pedagogical devices that operate in the production of masculinities within bodily practices linked to the field of physical education. Drawing on the articulation of Foucauldian discursive studies and decolonial approaches, the authors adopt a critical 'archigenealogical' attitude to examine the historical relations between practices, discourses, and power. They argue that the normalization of male bodies and ways of being a man is intrinsically associated with the production of colonial difference, showing how gender, race, and sexuality norms permeate bodily practices. In this way, by engaging with agendas from feminist politics and gender studies, the authors advocate for the construction of fissures, displacements, and forms of resistance capable of re-signifying physical education as spaces of contestation, plurality, and the invention of other masculinities.

Misogyny and cultural impoverishment: the educational effects of symbolic violence against women in sports media, by Paula Bianchi, Irene Moya-Mata, Helena Altmann, and Ruth Cabeza-Ruiz, analyzes the representation of women's sports in the Spanish print media with the aim of identifying forms of exclusion and symbolic violence in the media treatment of female athletes. The authors found a low presence of women's sports in headlines and covers of sports newspapers in Spain, as well as different forms of symbolic violence and gender stereotypes associated with the analyzed material – including discriminatory treatment, infantilization, objectification, invisibility, and sensationalist approaches – that perpetuate the androcentric sports model. They argue that the lack of consistent media coverage of women's sports limits public knowledge of sports culture and the formation of identities among girls and adolescents. The authors advocate for the inclusion of this debate in schools, with the goal of promoting a critical reading of media messages and strengthening resistance to the multiple forms of discrimination that affect women in the sports context.

The articles that compose this Special Issue, as a whole, reveal the strength of themes and emblematic issues capable of fostering critical and interdisciplinary debates in the field of gender studies, feminisms, bodies, sport, leisure, and education. The works gathered here problematize questions related to the physical culture of Muslim women and of diverse women in social projects; women's right to leisure, sport, and the city; ecofeminist training; the production of masculinities and their interfaces with feminisms; sexism in sports media; decolonial perspectives in physical education and bodily practices; as well as critiques of power

hierarchies that have historically marginalized Afro-diasporic knowledge. Moreover, the texts highlight the persistence of symbolic violence, gender inequalities, and multiple forms of exclusion in sports, educational, and media contexts, while at the same time announcing possibilities of resistance, transformation, and ‘re-existence’. They emphasize the value of collaborative methodologies, sensitive listening, the construction of inclusive and critical pedagogical practices, and a social commitment to justice, equity, the recognition of differences, and the transformation of power relations.

We hope that this collective production may inspire new research, practices, and critical dialogues, contributing to the expansion of the field of physical culture as a space for the recognition of differences, the contestation of inequalities, and the affirmation of women’s struggles (and those of other subalternized identities) toward social justice. We aspire that the debates gathered here may resonate beyond the pages of this Special Issue, constituting an ethical, political, and epistemological invitation to confront fear, silencing, and the violences that traverse bodies and existences. The aim is to strengthen processes of transformation committed to valuing plural bodies, diverse knowledges, and experiences that challenge patriarchy, racism, cisheteronormativity, and other forms of oppression. As Judith Butler^{9:09} reminds us, “the task before us is to try to understand this ever-accelerating escalation and this combination of potential and literal dangers, and to question how we might combat a specter of such magnitude and intensity [...]”.

By bringing together voices, experiences, and multiple perspectives, this Special Issue calls for an embodied, historically situated, and empowering practice within the field of physical culture. It inscribes itself as an invitation to the construction and reconstruction of women’s histories in their relations with physical culture, understood here in its myriad of community-based, resistant, democratic, transgressive, affective, antifascist, and poetic expressions, materialized, notably, as decolonial practices of freedom and affirmation of life.

References

1. Chiés PV. Decolonialidade e esporte: mulheres negras na linha de chegada! *Corpoconsciência*. 2024;28:e17217. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51283/rc.28.e17217>
2. Lorde A. Não existe hierarquia de opressão. In: Hollanda HB de, editor. *Pensamento feminista: conceitos fundamentais* [Internet]. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo; 2019 [cited 2026 May 20]. p. 235-236. Available from: https://www.mpba.mp.br/sites/default/files/biblioteca/direitos-humanos/direitos-das-mulheres/obras_digitalizadas/heloisa-buarque-de-hollanda-pensamento-feminista_-conceitos-fundamentais-bazar-do-tempo-2019_.pdf
3. Arruda A. Feminismo, gênero e representações sociais. In: Hollanda HB de, editor. *Pensamento feminista brasileiro: formação e contexto* [Internet]. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo; 2019 [cited 2026 May 20]. p. 335-355. Available from: https://nenp.ufms.br/files/2024/09/Heloisa-Buarque-de-Hollanda-Pensamento-feminista-brasileiro_-formacao-e-contexto-Bazar-do-Tempo-201.pdf
4. Fullagar S, Rich E, Pavlidis A, van Ingen C, editors. *Transforming sport and physical cultures through feminist knowledges*. London: Routledge; 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003165798>
5. Segato RL. Gênero e colonialidade: em busca de chaves de leitura e de um vocabulário estratégico descolonial. *e-cad CES*. 2012;(18):106-131. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/eces.1533>
6. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Women’s rights in review: 30 years after Beijing*. New York: UN Women; 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789211071771>
7. Brasil. Lei n. 11.340, de 7 de agosto de 2006. *Coíbe a violência doméstica e familiar contra a mulher*. Brasília: Presidência da República; 2006 [cited 2026 May 18]. Available from: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/111340.htm
8. Brasil. Lei n. 14.994, de 9 de outubro de 2024. *Dispõe sobre o feminicídio como crime autônomo*. Brasília: Presidência da República; 2024 [cited 2026 May 18]. Available from: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2023-2026/2024/lei/L14994.htm

9. Butler J. Quem tem medo do gênero? Candiani HR, translator. São Paulo: Boitempo; 2024.
10. Lugones M. Rumo a um feminismo descolonial. Rev Estud Fem. 2014;22(3):935-952. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-026X2014000300013>
11. Davis A, Collins PH, Federici S. Democracia para quem?: ensaios de resistência. São Paulo: Boitempo; 2023.

Acknowledgements: This work was supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development – CNPq, through the project ‘Decolonial challenges in physical culture: ethnic-racial, gender and social class crossings’ (Process No. 407669/2023-0). We extend our sincere thanks to the authors who contribute to this Special Issue, whose manuscripts on women, physical culture, and decolonial challenges foster fruitful and thought-provoking reflections.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Eliane Regina Crestani Tortola: Conceptualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Ábia Lima de França: Conceptualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Larissa Michelle Lara: Conceptualization; Project administration; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

ORCID

Eliane Regina Crestani Tortola: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0588-2471>

Ábia Lima de França: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3087-0731>

Larissa Michelle Lara: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9210-6360>

Editor: Carlos Herold Junior

Received on June 1, 2026.

Revised on June 19, 2026.

Accepted on June 21, 2026.

Corresponding author: Eliane Regina Crestani Tortola. E-mail: elianetortola@ufpr.br